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# 2003

## REPORT TO THE 26<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

Dear Neighbor,

Another challenging legislative session is under way here in Olympia and I'm pleased to say that we are already making progress on some important issues.

As chair of the Judiciary Committee, I made a commitment last fall that the first order of business this session would be to criminalize up-skirt photography. We have already passed this bill out of the House and the measure may be law by the time you receive this newsletter.

We have also begun work on a package of transportation accountability reforms designed to ensure that our transportation dollars are spent wisely. Most importantly, these reforms will streamline transportation decision-making to provide a single point of accountability in our transportation system. As of this writing, the bills are moving rapidly through the legislative process.

There are many other issues which we will be grappling with this session including a huge budget shortfall, protecting higher education, and reducing property taxes for seniors, to name a few. Inside this newsletter, I'll discuss these and some of the other tough issues facing our state.

As always, please contact me with your comments about any issues that concern you and thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you in Olympia.

Sincerely,

### WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Protecting education
- Transportation accountability
- Reducing property taxes for seniors
- Protecting community treasures

# PATRICIA LANTZ • SERVING THE 26TH DISTRICT

## PROTECTING EDUCATION IN TOUGH BUDGET TIMES

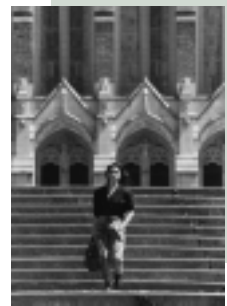
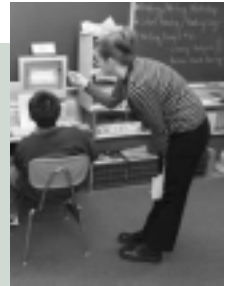
### ■ K - 12 SCHOOLS:

The governor has unveiled a proposed budget that contains steep cuts to education, health care and social services. If these cuts are enacted, they will have a real effect on teachers and students, the health of our citizens, and the economic security of many in our state. Fortunately, the governor's budget is merely a starting point for negotiations.

While the \$2.4 billion budget deficit will require us to make some major cuts, we will not abandon our commitment to building a world-class education system. We are already looking at several long-term ideas to shore up our schools including the establishment of an education trust fund that insulates education spending in tight budget times.

### ■ HIGHER EDUCATION:

Another area of our state budget that is under great scrutiny is our college and university system. In recent years, school enrollments have been rising sharply and the needs of these schools have risen accordingly. Many institutions of higher education need significant capital investments – new classrooms, laboratories, auditoriums and other facilities. In my position on both the Higher Education and Capital Budget committees, I will be doing my best to ensure that our universities have the resources they need to provide students with an outstanding education and remain a powerful economic engine in our state.



## TRANSPORTATION ACCOUNTABILITY LEADS OFF

The first issue on our transportation agenda this session is to pass a package of accountability reforms- and we've delivered already. As of this writing, three accountability measures — House Bills 1120, 1121 and 1122 — have passed the House and are now in the hands of the Senate.

The measures would:

- Set up a panel of citizen experts to monitor the transportation system (House Bill 1120).
- Establish a system of regular performance audits of DOT to help guide transportation planning and spending (House Bill 1121).
- Increase political accountability by dissolving the Transportation Commission and granting the governor the authority to hire and fire the secretary of transportation (House Bill 1122).

House Bill 1122 is especially important because it provides transparency in our transportation system.

In our community, we know well the importance of having transparent process in transportation planning. The state's approach to building a second Tacoma Narrows Bridge serves as a case study on how communities are too often left out. Fortunately, our push for public accountability and public financing paid off – the first two rounds of bond issues for the bridge have sold at interest rates much lower than originally forecasted, saving taxpayers and toll-payers even more money.

A measure I sponsored and that we've passed protects the privacy of motorists who use transponders to pay tolls. House Bill 1019 would prohibit law enforcement agencies and businesses from obtaining information about a motorist's travel habits. An exception would exist for law enforcement agencies when they have a subpoena stemming from a criminal investigation.



# 2003 REPORT TO THE 26TH DISTRICT

## FULL SLATE FOR JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

### ■ CRIMINALIZING UP-SKIRT FILMING

We have a busy slate of issues before the Judiciary Committee this session. First off was a measure to criminalize up-skirt filming in response to the state Supreme Court's ruling last fall that our voyeurism statute did not apply to filming in a public place. By the time you receive this, I am confident that this bill will be on its way to the governor's desk to become law.

### ■ DOING WHAT'S BEST FOR A CHILD

In passing laws that affect children, it is critical that we keep the best interests of the child in mind. And with more children than ever before being raised by grandparents, other relatives, and caregivers other than their birth parents, we must adapt to the needs of these children. Good people acting in the role of parents — whether they are birth parents or not — should be able to maintain a relationship with a child they've helped raise. Unfortunately, in some situations, these individuals have little recourse to maintain that relationship if a birth parent decides to cut that person off from a child. This session I'll be working to address this issue by giving these people the rights they deserve to preserve the strong bond they've formed with a child.

### ■ CONTROLLING MEDICAL MALPRACTICE COSTS

The Judiciary Committee will also be taking up the complex and costly issue of medical malpractice. Malpractice insurance premiums are driving some doctors out of business around our state. Unfortunately, some of the prescriptions for fixing this problem may do more harm than good. Curtailing the ability of patients to get relief when they've been harmed is not the answer. Neither is the current situation where doctors find themselves unable to ensure patient access to care because of the tightening financial bind they are in. This session we are hoping to build a consensus for medical malpractice reform that keeps our doctors on duty in a satisfying professional environment and keeps our citizens healthy and secure.

## REDUCING PROPERTY TAXES FOR SENIORS

Thousands of senior citizens have been dropped from a property tax relief program in recent years because eligibility standards have not been adjusted for inflation since 1998. And many of these seniors have taken a doubly hard hit because getting kicked off the program also unfreezes their property values. The result is that terrible tax-spikes are driven into the budgets of people who cannot afford them. To address this problem, I am working to raise the eligibility standards for the property tax relief program to enable many additional senior citizens, disabled veterans, and people with disabilities statewide to qualify for the property tax relief program.

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**SERVING  
THE 26TH  
DISTRICT**

# 2003 REPORT TO THE 26TH DISTRICT

## PROTECTING TREASURES IN OUR COMMUNITY

I'm pleased to announce that I have become involved in two efforts that will help protect treasures in our community. As a new board member of the Washington Wildlife & Recreation Coalition I will be working to secure funding for some important projects to set aside both open space and recreation lands in our community and across the state. One of the projects in line for development funding is Anderson Point on Colvos Passage, a Kitsap County Park.

Additionally, I've recently been named co-chair of the Heritage Caucus which advocates for the preservation of historic buildings, arts facilities and other landmarks around the state. Two Heritage projects are up for funding in the 26<sup>th</sup> District this year- the Gig Harbor Historical Museum and the Western Washington Center for the Performing Arts in Port Orchard.



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